

## **Blog sample 1**

### **Removing garage roof asbestos cost - A Stashbee guide**

How much it will cost to remove asbestos from your garage roof and more.

Clearing out or doing up your garage? You might be wondering what the roof is made of and whether it contains the dreaded asbestos. Most of us know that asbestos is bad, but few of us really know what it is or how to deal with it.

#### **What is asbestos and what's it doing in my garage roof?**

Asbestos was a bit of a wonder material up to 1999 when it was banned in new buildings in the UK. Combined with cement in sheets asbestos is durable, cheap, weather and fire-proof and so a popular choice for garage roofs, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. But inhaling asbestos fibres causes cancers including mesothelioma and lung cancer, hence the UK ban and why you need to be aware of what your garage roof is made of before doing any work on it.

#### **How to identify asbestos**

Unfortunately there's no easy way to identify asbestos in your garage (or shed) roof. If your garage was built in the 20th century it probably does have an asbestos roof; if it was built after 1999, it won't. Garage roof tiles containing asbestos are often corrugated (but so are cement fibre ones unhelpfully) and will have lichen growing on them (but again, so will cement fibre tiles). A lot of lichen is a clue as to how long your roof has been up though, so more lichen could mean an older and therefore asbestos-containing roof. If you're lucky you'll find a batch code printed on the underside of your roof panels; look for AC for asbestos and CE or C for cement fibre. Not all manufacturers printed codes on the tiles though and it's likely that any marks have faded over the years. Both asbestos and cement fibre roof tiles crack over time; if your roof has cracks or is breaking apart, it could be that you have asbestos roof tiles. Dimples or craters on the roofing can also be a sign that it contains asbestos. If your garage roof tiles are cracked or breaking apart, protect yourself - be careful when using your garage as the asbestos has become more friable, meaning it's more likely to break down and fibres be inhaled.

#### **Testing for asbestos**

If you suspect that your garage roof contains asbestos, get it tested to see if asbestos is present. If a piece has already broken off, the HSE says that you can take a sample yourself if there is no risk of spreading debris or exposing yourself to dust. They recommend that you dampen the sample, place it in a self-sealing polythene bag, put that bag in a second self-sealing bag and label it. You can find a UKAS accredited asbestos-testing laboratory on the [HSE website](#). If you can't safely get a sample yourself, get a company to carry out an asbestos survey and collect a sample for analysis.

#### **What to do if asbestos is present**

If asbestos is present, you have three options: removing and replacing the roof; encapsulating (sealing) the roof so asbestos fibres can't escape; or, if the roof is in good enough condition, leaving it in place with an asbestos management plan. As asbestos is such a dangerous material, don't DIY it if the tiles or sheeting are cracked or damaged as the asbestos fibres can escape. The HSE advises that you should not try to repair or remove any asbestos materials yourself if you have not had training for non-licensed asbestos work.

#### **Cost of dealing with an asbestos garage roof**

According to [householdquotes.co.uk](#) an asbestos survey will cost from £50 to £200. Encapsulation of an asbestos roof will set you back from £8 per square metre. Removal and replacement of asbestos roofing starts at £50 per square metre including materials and labour, so that's £380 to remove and replace a single garage roof or £750 for a double garage.

## **How worried should you be?**

If this all sounds expensive, there's some good news. Not all asbestos is the same. There are six common types, three of which were used in roofing; blue asbestos (crocidolite), brown asbestos (amosite) and white asbestos (chrysotile). The most commonly used asbestos in roofing sheets is also the least harmful - white asbestos. The most dangerous asbestos, blue, was banned in the UK in 1985 along with brown asbestos. Asbestos roofs are long lasting and shouldn't show any signs of wear for at least 50 years or even 80 years in the case of thicker asbestos roofing sheets that are a quarter of an inch thick. Cement asbestos roofing is around 10% asbestos fibres making asbestos garage roofs relatively low risk. Cement asbestos is also one of the most stable of the asbestos containing materials and is less likely to release asbestos fibres according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The HSE advises that, if asbestos materials are in good condition and in a place where they are unlikely to be disturbed, then they should not cause any harm. It is only when the materials are damaged and fibres are released that asbestos can become a danger. If your asbestos cement roofing is in good condition you may be able to seal it and keep an eye on it - asbestos cement sheeting sealants are widely available, just be careful to follow the safety instructions and don't rub down before painting or you'll release fibres. A sealing kit will cost around £150 and should protect your asbestos garage roof for 10 years.

## **What to do with the space**

Once your garage roof is sorted, consider whether you need all of the space. Stashbee is the space place - we connect people with space to those who need it. You could rent your garage for parking or storage and put that unused space to good use. Check out how here <https://stashbee.com/hosting> or check out our blog on five ways to make use of the space yourself <https://stashbee.com/blog/homeowners/5-ways-to-put-your-garage-to-good-use>.

## **Blog sample 2**

### **Top tips for selling success on Facebook Marketplace**

Most of us have got more stuff than we have space for. Could some of the things you don't need anymore make you some money on Facebook Marketplace? There are dozens of ways to buy and sell online, but Facebook Marketplace is about the easiest place to unload your unwanted stuff. All you need is something to sell, a camera and a Facebook account. Unlike Ebay, you won't pay any fees and, bonus, [Money Saving Expert](#) found that 70% of the time sellers made more selling on Facebook Marketplace than Ebay anyway. Follow our 10 tips to turn trash into cash.

#### **Tip 1: Check the market**

Find similar items for sale on Marketplace (the little shop icon on Facebook), their price and condition. Look out for great listings and awful ones and use this to make your listings some of the best (see tips 3-5). Think about what the item would cost new, factor in the condition of what you're selling and what you would be willing to pay. Look at Ebay too and watch similar items to see the final sale price. Gear that shifts well on Marketplace includes kids' stuff, popular goods like Nintendo Switches and spare TVs, and collection-only items like sofas and wardrobes.

#### **Tip 2: Price it right**

You want to set a competitive price but be aware that Marketplace buyers often try to knock some money off, so factor that in. Decide the lowest price you're prepared to part with the item for and add 20-30% to give you wiggle room with hagglers.

#### **Tip 3: Take great photos**

Your photos will draw buyers to look at your advert and should give them a clear idea of what the item is like. Take photos in natural light, against a neutral background and focus on

the item itself. You can post up to 10 photos so take pictures from different angles and include close ups of any wear or damage. Accurate pictures will spare you lots of questions and buyers turning up to collect an item, being disappointed when they see it in real life and not going through with the purchase.

#### **Tip 4: Compose a great title**

Browsers should know what you're selling from the title. Include any great selling points that will make your listing stand out – is the item unused or a desirable brand for example? You'll also have to select a category for your item from a pretty straightforward list.

#### **Tip 5: Write a really useful description**

Again, you want buyers to know what you're selling and avoid lots of questions. More is more: brand, model, accurate dimensions, basically anything you would want to know if you were buying. Be honest about the item's condition. You'll have to select from new, used/like new, used/good and used/fair, but this is subjective so describe any flaws clearly. These should be shown in your photos (tip 3). It's a waste of your time if the item isn't what buyers expect when they come to collect.

#### **Tip 6: Include how they'll get the item**

Some sellers are given the option to post to buyers. There's no fee for this until the end of 2022 but from 2023 Facebook will charge 2% of the item's price and postage. Posting isn't practical for many items and often descriptions include 'buyer collects' (see tip 9). Offering local delivery can also get you more interest.

#### **Tip 7: Answer inquiries promptly**

Good items get snapped up quickly on Facebook Marketplace. Download the Facebook Messenger app on your phone and be ready to answer messages or you could miss out as your buyer moves on to another seller. If you have several people interested in your item, it's up to you who to sell to. Some people go with the first person to message, others whoever can pick up first – it's your choice.

#### **Tip 8: Refresh and add groups**

If your item has been listed for a week and you haven't had a bite, renew the listing. Go to the item and click the three-dot icon on the listing thumbnail and hit renew listing from the drop-down menu. You'll also get an option to advertise in local Facebook buying and selling groups; add your item to one or more of these so more people see it. If you really want rid, drop the price.

#### **Tip 9: The handover**

Facebook Marketplace is most known for people selling unwanted household items to people in their local area so often buyers collect from the seller's home and pay cash. It's never a bad idea to think about safety so arrange for someone else to be home with you if a buyer is collecting and swap your unwanted bits for cash on the doorstep where practical. You can arrange to meet up in a public place, just make sure it's somewhere safe and well lit. Think carefully if you're offloading a valuable item (if you're flogging designer gear though you'll make more money selling on a specialist site like [Designer Exchange](#) or [Vestiaire Collective](#)). If you're posting an item, make sure that you've been paid before sending. PayPal is a safe payment method but scammers can send fake emails showing that your account has been credited so check you've received the money before posting.

#### **Tip 10: If Facebook Marketplace has failed you**

If you've had no luck selling on Marketplace, try free local classified sites like [Gumtree](#) or free to advertise site [Preloved](#) and app [Shpock](#). For that mountain of unwanted CDs, DVDs, games or books, try resellers; you won't make a packet but it's pretty painless. [Music](#)

[Magpie](#), [Ziffit](#), [GameXchange](#) and [We Buy Books](#) will pay the postage for you to send them your stuff and pay you later. If you prefer cold, hard cash try [CEX](#) on the high street. Read our guide on how to get rid of things sustainably [here](#) for anything you can't sell. If you've still got too much stuff, you could rent a storage space. Stashbee is the space place - we connect people with space to those who need it. Check out spaces [here](#).

### **Blog sample 3**

#### **How To Find Free Parking For Electric Vehicles in London**

You're saving the planet in your EV – is it too much to ask to be able to park in London without it costing the earth? At Stashbee we've got you covered (or parked at least) in this guide to electric vehicle parking in London.

#### **Where you live matters**

A lot of London has controlled parking zones limiting who can park there, when and at what cost. Unfortunately each London borough has its own rules when it comes to parking charges for electric vehicles (aka EVs) and other low emission vehicles like plug-in hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.

#### **Boroughs with free residents parking for EVs**

Electric vehicle parking in London is best in several London boroughs which give residents with a fully electric vehicle a free resident's parking permit. [Barking and Dagenham](#), [Hammersmith and Fulham](#), [Newham](#) and [Westminster](#) all offer one free permit. In [Hounslow](#), [Redbridge](#) and [Richmond](#) you might even wangle a free permit for a parking space for a second EV.

#### **Boroughs with discounts for EV**

You'll get a discount on your residents parking permit in the following boroughs, but how much you save varies enormously. The biggest savings seem to be in [Tower Hamlets](#) where an EV owner will pay just £30 compared to £405 for the biggest gas guzzler. In [Brent](#) and [Croydon](#) the worst polluters will pay up to 10 times as much as you. In [Southwark](#) you'll save 75% on your permit for having an EV. You'll make a saving in all of the following boroughs but how much varies: [Barnet](#), [Camden](#), [Ealing](#), [Enfield](#), [Greenwich](#), [Haringey](#), [Hackney](#), [Harrow](#), [Islington](#), [Kensington and Chelsea](#), [Lewisham](#), [Lambeth](#), [Waltham Forest](#) and [Wandsworth](#).

#### **The bad guys**

Some boroughs seem to be oblivious to the good your EV is doing and offer no real savings for being an electric vehicle driver. [Bexley](#), [Bromley](#), [Kingston](#) and [Merton](#) base their vehicle permit prices on area or have a flat fee irrespective of vehicle type. [Hillingdon](#) gives all residents a free permit for their first vehicle no matter what it's spewing out. We couldn't access prices in Havering, but it's one of the [cheapest boroughs](#) for parking in London anyway apparently.

#### **Visiting London in an EV**

If you're just visiting London the bad news is that, unless you're hanging with friends in some very specific postcodes, the fact that you're driving an EV makes little difference. If you're parking an EV or plug-in hybrid in [Westminster](#) you can park for the maximum time allowed in on-street pay-to-park parking bays and only pay for 10 minutes. In [Islington](#) you'll only be charged 20p to park your EV. You'll be rewarded with cheaper parking in [Kensington and Chelsea](#), the [City of London](#), Croydon, Hammersmith & Fulham and Richmond using RingGo. These are all pay by phone or app options rather than ticketed pay and display.

[Haringey](#) comes out on top. They say: 'Electric vehicles (excluding hybrids and plug-in hybrids) can park free of charge in dedicated pay by phone bays in the borough, but the maximum stay and no return periods will remain applicable.' Unfortunately, elsewhere in London you'll pay the same as a pollution spewing chariot.

### **Charge and park?**

If you're low on juice, finding an EV charging point and charging rather than parking could be the answer. In [Hillingdon](#) it's free to charge but you might have to pay for the parking. You can park and charge in [Newham](#) for up to 4 hours and if you're charging in [Waltham Forest](#) you won't have to pay additional charges. Unfortunately at NCP car parks it seems you could pay twice, once for charging and for parking on top, although we couldn't get a clear answer from them.

### **Free parking in London for any vehicle**

A lot of London has controlled parking zones so finding a free spot is a challenge. [Parkopedia](#) might help – put in where you are going and it will show you the parking options. You can select to look for car parks or on-street parking and sort results by distance or price. Be warned though, unless you're looking in outer London boroughs, parking is going to cost you.

### **Other savings**

Even if you won't save a packet on parking in many London boroughs you will be spared the congestion charge; according to [TfL](#), zero emission vehicles that meet the criteria are eligible for a 100% discount on the congestion charge [saving you £15 a day](#) for a zoom around London. You'll also be exempt from the ULEZ (ultra low emissions zone) charges saving you [£12.50 a day](#). Wherever you live, zero emission-capable vehicles (so 100% pure electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles) either pay [no vehicle tax or a reduced rate](#).

### **Help to buy**

If you're not already the proud owner of an EV but want to be, it's worth knowing that the Government offers [grants](#) of up to £2,500 for new plug-in cars. You could get £1,500 for a motorcycle, £6,000 for a van, £7,500 for a taxi or £16,000 for a truck. The [EcoExperts](#) found in April 2021 that 17% of UK citizens intend to buy an EV in the next 12 months so you'd be part of a growing green gang.

### **Help to install an EV charging point**

If you want to install your own electric vehicle charge point you may be able to get a [grant](#) worth either £350 or 75% off the cost to buy and install a socket, whichever amount is lower.

### **Charging on the cheap**

[London City Council](#) counted almost 5,000 EV charging points in the capital at the start of 2020. According to Zap Map, 353 of these are free to use. Use [Zap Map](#) to find them.

### **Rent a space**

If you'd rather rent a garage for your precious planet saver, at Stashbee we connect people with space to those who need it. Search by area to see garages available for rent near you <https://stashbee.com/>. If you have a garage you're not going to use because parking your EV on the street is cheap where you live, you could rent it to someone who needs it - find out how here <https://stashbee.com/hosting>.

To be sure you don't fall foul of parking laws, check out [our blog on UK parking laws](#).

## **Blog sample 4**

### **How Make the Perfect Under Stairs Shoe Storage Space: A Stashbee Guide**

When it comes to storage, every little space counts. In many homes, under the stairs is a valuable bit of space often not made best use of. We have some of the best ideas for making it work as under stairs shoe storage.

#### **The easy option**

The quickest and easiest option is to measure your under stairs space and buy a ready made shoe rack (or racks) that fits. There are hundreds of options out there from as little as £6 at [Dunelm](#) to £20 at [John Lewis](#) or £28 at [Argos](#) for a bigger rack that you could paint to match your decor. Combine different heights of unit to make the most of the sloping space; this tall one from [Amazon](#) could be combined with lower shoe racks to maximise storage. This pick and mix approach is easy but not very attractive; it's appropriate if your under stairs storage already has doors or if you're planning to fit some.

#### **Easy bespoke space filling**

To make the most of every inch of your under stairs space we can recommend clip together wire shelves like these from [Amazon](#) (they're currently keeping my extensive shoe collection organised in an under stair cupboard). You can put them together in a configuration that fits your under stairs space and they're easy to rearrange if you make a mistake. Again, these aren't the best looking, so best if you have doors on your under stairs space.

#### **Easy on the eye options**

If you don't have doors on your under stairs space and don't plan on fitting some, choose storage that's better looking than the options above. You could buy storage specifically for shoes; [IKEA](#) has cabinets from £24.50, [Swoon](#) has a cabinet which looks good as well as being functional for £389 and you'll find myriad options in between at [Habitat](#) and [Daals](#). Measure your under stairs space accurately with a metal tape measure and compare this carefully to the dimensions of the storage you're thinking of buying.

#### **Think outside the (shoe) box**

You don't have to store your shoes in shoe storage. A chest of drawers, cabinet, bureau or trunk could work too. The drawers in a chest of drawers work best for flats and trainers, a trunk might be better for taller boots or if you don't mind rummaging through footwear to find a pair in the morning. The advantage of choosing furniture that isn't specifically designed for shoes is that you should be able to find something that fits your home decor. You can also look for bargains on Facebook Marketplace, Freecycle and Ebay and make your shoe storage sustainable by giving a secondhand piece of furniture a new purpose. Measuring up carefully is important, as is being realistic about how many shoes you need to store.

#### **Install a rail**

Hear me out. You can buy rails cheaply (for example at [Toolstation](#)) and get rails you fix to the [wall](#) or in a [corner](#). Combine your rail with [hanging shoe storage](#) and voila. Make sure that the rail and wall fixing can handle the weight of the shoes you intend to hang though.

#### **Make use of the back of cupboard doors**

If your under stairs storage has doors, [fix door hanging shoe storage](#) to them. If you predict shoes flying off a shelf every time you open the cupboard, try a version with [pockets](#).

#### **DIY shelves**

If you're good at DIY, fit shelves in your under stairs space. The advantage is that you can make full use of the space and choose the right gap between shelves for the types of shoes

you need to store (heels, tall boots, flats, trainers). Wood is increasingly expensive even from timber merchants but you will have a completely bespoke under stair shoe storage solution.

### **For the expert DIY-er**

If you're a confident DIY-er there are some truly inspirational ideas for what to do with your under stairs space including [slide out under stairs storage drawers](#). A less ambitious idea is to use [IKEA shelving](#) and cut to fit to the space.

### **In-stair storage drawers**

If you don't have a void underneath your stairs you can still incorporate storage by fitting drawers in the stair tread itself. This [video](#) shows you how – it's a challenging project though so one for expert DIY-ers only.

### **Get in the professionals**

If you have cash to splash, a professional can create under stairs shoe storage most of us can only dream of. If you don't have the skills to do it yourself but still want [slide out cupboards](#), shelves, or even to [lift up the stairs themselves](#) to reveal storage, there's someone out there who can make your under stairs shoe storage dreams come true.

### **Avoiding a stinky cupboard**

Once you've got your storage sorted, all of those shoes in one place might brew up a niff so pop an [odour neutraliser](#) in your cupboard. If you've decided to use a chest of drawers or other storage option where your shoes are in different compartments, stick [a bin odour neutraliser](#) on the inside of each space; it's cheaper than individual odour neutralisers and will take up less space.

### **Don't forget the floor**

If you've gone for a rail or shelves you can use the floor space for more shoes. If you have carpet in your under stair space, consider putting down some [carpet protector](#) – you can wipe it clean so it's a bit more hygienic.

If you're in need of storage space Stashbee is the space place – we connect people with space to those who need it. Check out spaces [here](#).